



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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DHS HELPS MORE FAMILIES PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE

TENNESSEANS NOW HAVE NEW TOOL TO FIND OUT IF THEY QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS

Nashville—Thousands of Tennesseans are scrimping and saving just to put food on the table. Even though the recent national study found that Tennessee families and children are faring better than the national average when it comes to participating in the federal Food Stamps Program, there are still many families that could be receiving benefits but are not.

The annual Kids Count study found that an average of 41% of eligible families across the nation do NOT participate in the Food Stamps Program. In Tennessee, 31% of eligible families do not participate. While state Department of Human Services notes that Tennessee's rate is lower than the national average, the department's assistant commissioner for Adult and Family Services said the state still has a long way to go.

"We're pleased that Tennessee is above the national average in determining food stamp eligibility," said Glenda Shearon. "The fact that nearly 70% of eligible families are receiving this benefit is a clear indicator that our public outreach programs are working. But we want the remaining 30% who qualify to access these federal benefits."

Many people just don't know they qualify. So DHS has set up a link on its Internet page so anyone can see if they qualify for benefits and how much they would receive. The link is found at <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/foodstamps.htm#calculator>.

"This will make it easier for citizens to assess if they may qualify for Food Stamps," said Shearon. "The new web link is just one way we hope to better serve Tennesseans who need a little extra help."

The Food Stamp Program is 100% federally funded. During the month of April 2003, 318,948 Tennessee households comprised of 736,224 individuals received \$60,342,407 in food stamp benefits.

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